

Columbia City Landmark District Guidelines

The preservation of existing historically and architecturally significant resources is highly desired. The rehabilitation standards established by the Secretary of the Interior shall serve as guidelines. The intent of the Standards is to assist the long-term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features. When new construction is proposed, the goal is to ensure compatibility with existing development in terms of scale, materials, and setbacks. Reproduction or recreation of earlier buildings is not desired.

PURPOSE/GOALS

The purposes and goals of the District are:

- A. To preserve, protect, enhance, and perpetuate those elements of the District's cultural, social, economic, architectural, and historic heritage;
- B. To foster community and civic pride in the significance and accomplishments of the past;
- C. To stabilize or improve the historic authenticity, economic vitality, and aesthetic value of the district;
- D. To promote and encourage continued private ownership and use of buildings and other structures;
- E. To encourage continued City interest and support in the District; And
- F. To promote the local identity of the area.

CRITERIA/VALUES

The Review Committee and Board shall consider the following criteria/ values in the use of its Guidelines:

1. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Structures,
2. The criteria of the Columbia City Landmark District Ordinance, and 3. The following categories of properties of the Columbia City Landmark District:
Category I: Buildings with an identifiable architectural or historic significance to either the development of Columbia City or the city of Seattle, may be characterized by a distinctive architectural style or contain elements of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship which are characteristic of an architectural type. May include historic sites.

Category II: Buildings with less architectural or historic significance but, because of scale, design, use of materials or location, make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area as a whole.

Category III: Buildings or sites with neither architectural nor historic significance, nor that make any significant contribution to the visual quality of the area.

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GUIDELINES/GENERAL

The Review Committee and Board shall consider the following guidelines with respect to the District when making decisions:

1. Scale should be compatible with existing development in the District.
2. The District should be pedestrian oriented on the street level.
3. The self-contained, small town quality of the District should be maintained.
4. A mixture of uses should be encouraged within the District;
 - a. Street level: restaurants, retail, commercial, public service offices.
 - b. Upper floors: restaurants, residential, professional offices, commercial.
5. The inventory of buildings, spaces, historic uses, historic views, and present uses should be respected and maintained.

GUIDELINES/SPECIFIC

The following specific guidelines shall be used by the Review Committee and Board when making decisions:

1. Scale of Buildings and Structures. The scale of all structures, in relationship to other structures and spaces is important. The scale should continue to be small and relatively uniform.
2. Building Materials and Fixtures. Integrity of structure, form and decoration should be respected. Building facades should be brick, wood, or other approved materials. Exterior light fixtures shall be in-keeping with the historic character of the District.
3. Building Surface Treatments. Approved surface treatments shall be consistent with the historic qualities of the District. No paint shall be applied to unpainted masonry surfaces. Painted surfaces shall be:
 - a. Repainted with the original historic color(s) of the building, provided that the business or property owner obtains a professional color analysis; or
 - b. Repainted with subdued colors that are appropriate and consistent with the historic building and other buildings in the District. Local paint stores have an "historic colors" palette that may be useful as a guide. The Coordinator also has a palette of historic colors that may be used as reference.
4. Storefront. Building facades should have a greater proportion of window and door openings than wall spaces on pedestrian levels. Any exterior façade alteration shall respect the original architectural integrity of the storefront. Recessed entryways and/ or alcoves shall be maintained for existing street level storefronts. Original fenestration shall be preserved (i.e. windows, transom areas and door design). Storefront materials such as brick, wood, concrete, and tile shall be used.
5. Transparency. To provide street level interest that enhances the pedestrian environment, street level uses shall have highly visible linkages with the street. Windows at street level shall permit visibility into the business, and visibility shall not be significantly obscured by security bars or gates, frosting, etching, painting, extensive signage, window darkening film or mirrored film, window treatments, or other means. The intent is to encourage pedestrians to focus on the products or services offered, rather than the signage.

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6. Landscaping. Landscaping is encouraged but not required. Approval of the use of landscaping, including window boxes and planters, shall be based on the applicant's desire and ability to maintain the landscaping.

7. Street Use. Any work that affects a street, alley, sidewalk, and other public right-of-way, shall be reviewed by the Review Committee and Board. Emphasis shall be placed on creating and maintaining pedestrian oriented public spaces and rights-of-way. Street trees and other plant materials that add human enjoyment to the District shall be encouraged. Decorative treatments within the sidewalk, including special paving patterns and building entryway tiling shall be preserved. The use of alleys for services and public-oriented activities shall be encouraged.

8. Street Furniture. All elements of street furniture, including but not limited to street lights, benches, trash receptacles, and planters shall be reviewed by the Review Committee and Board as to their specific compatibility with the District. Street furniture must be appropriately sized and sited to afford generous provisions for pedestrian flow.

9. Parking. To mitigate the potential impacts of required accessory parking and loading on the District, the Review Committee and Board may review parking requirements for individual building rehabilitation projects or changes of use in existing buildings on a case-by-case basis. The Board may write a letter of support to the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use Director for a reduction in required parking or loading for a specific building rehabilitation project or change of use in an existing building if the Review Committee and Board find that reasonable application of the parking or loading standards will adversely affect the character of the District or will not further District goals.

10. Awnings/Canopies/Marquees. Marquees, awnings, and canopies will be encouraged at street level. Shiny, high-gloss materials are not appropriate. Distinctive architectural features shall not be covered, nor shall installation damage the structure. Awnings may be installed on upper levels where appropriate.

11. Signs. All signs on or hanging from buildings, windows, or applied to windows, are subject to review and approval by the Review Committee and Board. Sign applications will be evaluated according to the overall impact, size, shape, texture, lettering style, method of attachment, color, and lighting in relation to use, the building and street where the sign will be located, and the relation of the sign to other signs and other buildings in the District. The primary reference will be to the average pedestrian's eye-level view, although views into or down the street from adjacent buildings will be an integral feature of any review.

The regulations in Seattle Municipal Code 23.55 (Signs) and the following guidelines shall apply to signs in the District. The provisions of these guidelines are intended to apply to any sign located out-of-doors; or if indoors, within three feet of a window and visible from the street, sidewalk or other public place, intended to apply to "place of business" identification, and that is intended to be permanent.

These provisions are not intended to apply to signs that are to be displayed for only a limited time or to draw attention to short-term occurrences such as farmers markets, street fairs, sales, special offerings, particular seasonal observances, or to merchandise in customary window displays.

The intent of sign regulations is to ensure that signs relate physically and visually to their location; that signs reflect the character and unique nature of the business; that signs do not hide, damage, or obstruct the architectural elements of the building; that signs be oriented toward and promote a pedestrian environment; and that the products or services offered be the focus, rather than the signs.

a. Window Signs and Hanging Signs. Generally, painted or vinyl letters in storefront windows and single-faced, flat surfaced painted wood signs are preferred. Extruded aluminum or plastics may not be appropriate. Window signs shall not cover a large portion of the window so as to be out of scale with the window, storefront, or facade.

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b. Blade Signs. Blade signs (double-faced projecting signs hanging perpendicular to the building), which are consistent in design with District goals are encouraged. Blade signs shall be installed in a manner that is in-keeping with other approved blade signs in the District. They shall not hide, damage, or obscure the architectural elements of the building. The size should be appropriately scaled for the building.

c. Symbolic Three Dimensional Signs. Symbolic three dimensional signs, such as a shaving mug, barber pole, pawn shop symbol, or other symbols illustrating the product being sold on the premises are acceptable provided they meet other sign guidelines. Signs should reflect the character and use within.

d. Off Premise Signs. Off-premise signs are prohibited except where areas have been reserved for groups of signs or for signs which identify the District as a whole as approved by the Board.

e. Upper Floor Signs. Appropriate signs shall be allowed on windows of upper floors as applicable (see requirements under a.).

f. Sandwich Board or "A-Frame" Signs. These types of signs are not allowed in Columbia City pursuant to Seattle Municipal Code 23.55.012.

g. Sign Lighting. Sign lighting should be subdued, incandescent, and front-lit from the exterior rather than back-lit of the fluorescent type. Back-lit signs are prohibited. Signs that flash, blink, revolve or are otherwise in motion or appear to be in motion, or signs that vary in intensity shall not be permitted.

h. Neon Signs. Neon may be permitted where judged appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Size, letter style, color, intensity and overall impact of the neon sign shall be evaluated for compatibility with the other signs and buildings in the District. If a plexiglass backing is proposed, then it shall be clear and colorless. Neon signs should be designed to reflect the unique nature of the use within. Mass-produced neon signs are strongly discouraged and will be reviewed by the Review Committee and Board on a case-by-case basis.

The number of allowable neon signs shall be limited to one for each 10 linear feet of business frontage or portion thereof. Signs need not be spaced one per 10 feet, but may be clustered, provided the grouping does not obscure visibility into the business. Permitted neon signs may be located in transom windows. Neon is permitted only as signage and shall not be used as decorative trim.